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**Abstract**

The artistic contribution that Directors of Photography make to the films that they shoot, in narrative mainstream cinema, has been historically ignored in favour of the director-centred *auteur* theory. In order to address this imbalance a new approach to attributing authorship in film needs to be implemented, which acknowledges co-authorship in collaborative film-making. By taking established *auteur* methodologies Philip Cowan, himself a practicing Director of Photography, analyses the role of cinematographers, and proposes new ways of evaluating their work.

**Keywords**

Cinematography, Authorship, Film, Toland, *Citizen Kane*, Welles

# Underexposed: The Neglected Art of the Cinematographer

## Introduction

Thanks to the widespread acceptance of the *auteur* theory in film studies, and its bias towards the film director as the single author of a film work, the cinematographers' role has been chiefly ignored by mainstream film theory and criticism. Popular film commentators almost always credit the director with the

look, or visual style, of a film, and this attitude is noticeable in academic research, epitomised by the way films are referenced, for example *Citizen Kane* (Welles, 1941). The implication in the reference is that Welles is the sole author of *Citizen Kane.*

The general academic view of the cinematographer is as a technician, charged with the technical and practical realisation of a director's vision. At best the cinematographer is viewed as an artisan, a craftsperson, whose expressive abilities are subordinate to those of the director.

The *auteur* theory needs to be re-evaluated. Directors are not the sole creative instigators of their films. There are teams of artists; writers, cinematographers, actors, editors, working within mainstream narrative cinema, and their creative contribution needs to be recognised more widely. By taking up the cause of the cinematographer I want to underline their key creative contribution, and begin to suggest a way of analysing their specific influences as co-authors of their images.

In re-assessing the *auteur* theory and highlighting the historical neglect of the cinematographer's work I have taken what I believe to be one of the single most iconic examples of an *auteur* film, *Citizen Kane*. I will look at Toland's contribution to *Kane*, and argue that his creative contribution to the film goes far beyond his recognised 'technical' achievements.

I would like not to fall into the trap laid by the early *auteur* theorists who linked authorship with quality. *Auteur* is often used as a signifier of quality direction, however authorship is a definition of process, rather than a criteria of quality. For the cinematographer there are significant modes of practice that effect their authorial role, which I would like to briefly outline.

**Conditions for the creative work of the cinematographer**

There are a number of factors, which affect the extent to which directors of photography can express their creativity. These can be summarised as the resources available to the cinematographer, the amount of preparatory time the cameraperson has to plan his/her approach, and the creative relationship that he/she has with the director of the project. If these three conditions are satisfactory then the scope of the creative input of the cinematographer increases. Any

restrictions within these three criteria would inevitably add limitations to his/her work.

### *Resources*

The first condition for creative work is the project's budget, ideally every resource must be made available to the cinematographer to realise his/her vision for a project, but this, of course, is not always practical or financially viable. Budgetary restrictions may mean that a shot that was envisaged as a tracking shot may not be able to be realised if the appropriate equipment is not available. The construction of purpose-built sets is restricted to films with high budgets, and is one of the reasons why Toland had so much control over the visualisation of the films that he supervised, and partly why we can attribute a great deal of responsibility of visual authorship to him. There are many examples of how financial, and technical restrictions can affect the work of the cinematographer. These practicalities do, of course, impact on creativity.

### *Preparatory Time*

> Bring the camera-man [*sic*] into the creative period of preparatory work on the film, and into participation in the creative process of making the film from beginning to end. (Nilsen n.d.: 226)

The second factor is the point at which the cinematographer is brought in on the project; both Nilsen and Toland himself make the point that the earlier the cameraperson is involved in the planning of a project, the better.

> Toland made no secret of his conviction that films were severely short-changed whenever the cinematographer did not seek, or was not given greater involvement in the film making process. (Wallace 1976: 25)

This enables them to acquire a good understanding of the thematic ideas of the narrative, and develop ways of constructing the visualisation, which best represents this. Occasionally the cinematographer can have an influence on the story structure itself.

***Directorial Partnerships***

The third factor affecting the creative work of the cinematographer is his/her working relationship with the director. The relationship between director and director of photography (DoP) is a difficult one to define, and the balance of creativity and collaboration between these roles is going to vary from partnership to partnership, film to film. Often directors will work with the same DoP regularly, for example; Powell and Cardiff, Bergman and Nykvist, Bertolucci and Storaro, Wyler and Toland, Hitchcock and Burke, Coen and Deakins, Kubrick and Alcott, Wong Kar Wai and Doyle, and Aronofsky and Libatique, because they come to a mutual understanding about visualisation. DoPs are not however limited in their creative expressions to only long-standing partnerships. Toland's most significant work is *Citizen Kane*, and he famously only worked with Welles once.

The dynamics of collaborating with a director, and also a production designer, do vary. Some directors have clear ideas about visualisation, but the degrees of those ideas range from overall stylistic approaches to specific storyboarded sequences, where frame and camera positions are predetermined.

In the latter case the preproduction task for the cinematographer is to refine those ideas, sometimes correcting technical issues of continuity, creating more clarity with time and space issues, and perhaps adding the odd suggestions as to alternative approaches that remain in the predetermined style.

The former circumstances allow, or demand, a more collaborative approach to the specific design of compositions, camera positions and sequences. This is a more rewarding experience for the cinematographer, which leads to work that is often improved by the interchanging of ideas. Often working with less experienced, or first-time directors, allows the cinematographer more creative freedom, however the overall visual design may suffer from the lack of collaboration, or the undeveloped visual literacy the director. The balance of authorship of the visual content in this group of films becomes much more weighted towards the cinematographer.

To a certain extent we can define directors, in terms of their collaborative attitudes, into certain categories (fig. 1). A fixed director is one who has his/her own visual scheme, which he/she will not change. These types of directors can be broadly represented by two extremes, those that are 'visionary', that is their

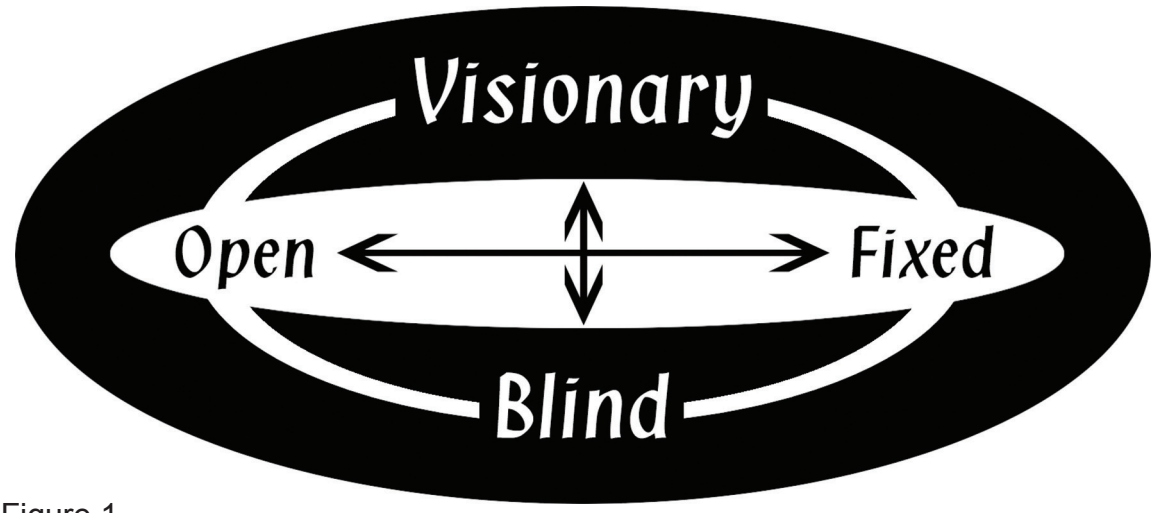


Figure 1.

fixed ideas of compositional construction are effective, and at the other end of the scale director's who we shall call 'blind'. The 'blind' director has no effective vision of the compositional construction of the film. I should probably further qualify the term 'blind'. 'Blind' is in no way used here as a derogatory term, it implies only what it means, that 'blind' directors' have little or no visual sense. The term also by no means indicates a 'bad' director, a director's function is to interpret a script by working with actors, and perhaps maintain a thematic and stylistic unity across the work of the writer, cinematographer, sound designer, editor and composer. A director can successfully and effectively perform these tasks but still have little direct impact on the visualisation of the film. Some director's emphasis, and talent, lies with working with actors and less with cinematography, it is the influence of the *auteur* theory, and the dominance of the idea of the director as the single author, that has lead to directors feeling inferior if they don't control the visual elements of a film. It is this that has consequently led to the downgrading of the cameraperson's role to that of technical photographer in most film analysis.

At the opposite end of the scale to the 'fixed director, is the 'open' director, who is willing to collaborate, discuss and develop ideas with the cinematographer. Again we can also apply the two characteristic ideas of 'visionary' and 'blind' to 'open' directors. The 'open-blind' director perhaps has little idea, no idea or no effective ideas on the visual construction of the film, and in this case the cinematographer may even be left to visual the film himself/herself, this of course gives Nilsen's idea of "maximum freedom" to the cinematographer (Nilsen n.d.: 113), but their ideas may or may not be effective. The 'open-visionary' director is probably the best combination of characteristics for the cinematographer to

work with, a director who has effective and creative ideas for the visualisation of a film, but is also ready to collaborate and accept ideas and refinements from the cinematographer.

As an example, Kubrick may be described as a 'fixed-visionary' director. One can see from his body of work that he has certain visual motifs and techniques that are repeated throughout his work, regardless of the different cinematographers that he works with. A detailed study of his films may reveal certain distinctive qualities in the films that he made with Alcott; *Clockwork Orange* (1971)*, Barry Lyndon* (1975)*, The Shining* (1980), as opposed to the films that he made with other cinematographers, but the overall style remains fairly consistent.

I would argue that Welles, in his collaboration with Toland on *Kane*, could be characterised, in the light of my own research into Toland's creative contribution to the film, as a 'blind-open' director. As I evidence the majority of the visual ideas in *Kane* were initiated by Toland. This in no way undermines Welles' work with the actors, and his overall marshalling of talent on the film. It just recognises Toland's contribution beyond his generally accepted technical achievements with 'deep focus', to the more creative aspects of composition, shot construction and sequencing, which he clearly influenced. The stumbling block for this type of analysis is, of course, the *auteur* theory.

## The *Auteur* Theory

Peter Wollen, in his book *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* ([1969] 1972) gives a good summation of the early development of the *auteur* theory.

> The *auteur* theory grew up rather haphazardly; it was never elaborated in programmatic terms, in a manifesto or collective statement. As a result, it could be interpreted and applied on rather broad lines; different critics developed somewhat different methods within a loose framework of common attitudes. This looseness and diffuseness of the theory has allowed flagrant misunderstandings to take root, particularly among critics in Britain and the United States. (Wollen 1972: 77)

Certainly the vagueness of the *auteur* theory is its main weakness. Apart from stating that the director is the sole author of the film, it goes little further in

analysing what specific contribution the director makes to qualify for this status. Individual directors are credited with different signatures, which range from thematic ideas to visual style. Thematic ideas, implicit in Sarris' final qualification for *auteur* status "inner meaning" (Sarris 1962: 43b), are surely present in the screenplay, which is the product of a screenwriter. Therefore there are inherent conflicts about attributing authorship in terms of thematic ideas when the director is not the writer. None of the directors championed by the early *auteur* theorists; Hitchcock, Hawks, Ford and Welles, wrote their most successful films. The most famous example of this is probably Kael's analysis of the writing process of *Citizen Kane* (Kael 1971). My assertion is that the same conflict of authorship arises when the director is not the cinematographer, which is obviously much more common.

According to the early *auteur* theorists screenwriters seem to do nothing more than prompt a director to structure, stage and film a narrative, as opposed to giving them a detailed, structured story with developed characterisation, and thematic ideas. Wollen gives a little bit of hope at the end of his 1972 essay by actually acknowledging there may be further study required.

> The *auteur* theory leaves us, as every theory does, with possibilities and questions. We need to develop much further a theory of performance, of the stylistic, of graded rather than coded modes of communications. We need to investigate and define, to construct critically the work of enormous numbers of directors who up to now have only been incompletely comprehended. We need to begin the task of comparing author with author. There are any number of specific problems which stand out: Donen's relationship to Kelly and Arthur Freed, Boetticher's films outside the Ranown cycle, Welles's relationship to Toland (and - perhaps more important - Wyler's). (Wollen 1972: 113-115)

It would encouraging if by saying "comparing author with author" Wollen meant screenwriter and director, but sadly he does not, in his initial comparison list he includes; directors, a song writer, a producer, and a DoP. Toland is the name that invariably pops up in discussions of the *auteur* Welles. This specific problem, 'Welles's relationship to Toland', is one that I would like to explore. My findings need to be read with an acknowledgement that the single author idea is redundant.

**Collaboration**

Perkins was one of the first critics to address this issue.

> The movies offer a constant challenge of connoisseurship. The credits supplied at the beginning of a picture are notoriously unreliable. Even when they are accurate they suggest a clearer demarcation of responsibility than exists among most film-makers during most productions. They may lead us to credit the writer with dialogue or action improvised by the director or the performers. Conversely, they may result in our attributing to the director visual effects devised by the designer, photographer or colour consultant. Unless one has watched the planning and making of a picture, it is impossible to know precisely who contributed each idea or effect to the finished movie. We cannot, for example, tell to what extent the editing was foreseen by the director during filming, supervised by him in the cutting rooms, or left to the ingenuity of the man named the editor. (Perkin 1972: 68a)

Perkins is also one of the first theorists to acknowledge that a collaborative film can be a good one. Unlike Mitry, who seems to think that "to say that a film is produced by teamwork, implying thereby that the *auteur* is the team, is absurd" (Mitry 1963: 3a), or Cameron, who believes the only way other contributors can have an effect is with a weak director (Cameron 1962: 32b). Perkins accepts the notion of collaboration, and believes it can have a positive effect.

A number of authors have commented on the fact that the cinematographers' role has not been analysed, or indeed even recognised, as widely as other filmmakers, for example, writers, producers, actors, and directors. In her study *Semiotics and Lighting: A Study of Six Modern French Cameramen*, Russell, makes that very observation.

> The importance of cinematography to the general style of a film has long been recognised, but while certain theoretical approaches have been developed or are being explored to deal with some of the key figures in the film making process, namely directors and writers, there have been no attempts to deal with the style of the visual image as a function of the role of the cinematographer. (Russell 1981: 3)

In her introduction to *Cinematographers on the Art and Craft of Cinematography:*

*Filmmakers, No.18,* a collection of articles written by cinematographers for *The International Photographer* between 1929 and 1937, Sterling writes;

> There can be little argument that cinematography is the life blood of the motion picture, but despite this the cinematographer has never received anything approaching the recognition given to the director or the screenwriter, or, for that matter, even the art director. Yet it was one of the greatest of art directors, William Cameron Menzies, who placed the cameraman on a par with the director in responsibility for the pictorial beauty of a film. (Sterling 1987: vii)

In a more pragmatic essay written for *Making Pictures: A Century of European Cinematography*, Greenhalgh dismisses the notion of the single author.

> It is the director who is seen as solely responsible for a film's content, that is, its conception and the formal realisation of both story and performance. The cinematographer's realm is perceived as relating to the 'style' of the film, and to the techniques and tools which serve it. This separation of duties reinforces beliefs about the roles which in reality considerably overlap. Despite what the credits or the studio bosses may say, on a film set there really is no *auteur*, but substantial interdependence. (Greenhalgh 2003: 145)

The general misconception, fuelled by *auteur* theorists, is that a director makes all the decisions about camera placement; angle, height, distance, and the cinematographers' role is to control the technical aspects of the director's plan. This may be the case for some cinematographers, content for the 'fixed' director to make all the creative decisions, but the great cinematographers of the past, and present, have had a view on which camera viewpoint, framing, and lighting best serves the film. These directors of photography are artists.

**Citizen Toland**

Toland shot most of the films heralded by the post-war film critics as introducing a 'new style' of film-making, identified by the use of 'deep focus', wide angle lenses, staging in depth, and long takes of continuous action. Bazin proclaims *Citizen Kane*, *The Long Voyage Home* (Ford, 1940)*, The Little Foxes* (Wyler, 1941)*,* and *The Best Years of Our Lives* (Wyler, 1946) as the key films in this 'new style', praising the directors; Welles, Ford and Wyler as great innovators, who developed

this new way of filming between them.

> Thus around 1938 films were edited, almost without exception, according to the same principle. The story was unfolded in a series of set-ups numbering as a rule about 600. The characteristic procedure was by shot-reverse-shot, that is to say, in a dialogue scene, the camera followed the order of the text, alternating the character shown with each speech. It was this fashion of editing, so admirably suitable for the best films made between 1930 and 1939, that was challenged by the shot in depth introduced by Orson Welles and William Wyler. The influence of *Citizen Kane* cannot be overestimated. Thanks to the depth of field, whole scenes are covered in one take, the camera remaining motionless. Dramatic effects for which we had formerly relied on montage were created out of the movements of the actors within a fixed framework. (Bazin 1967: 33)

Madsen, Wyler's biographer, puts the emphasis the other way.

> [Wyler] is the man who, toward the end of the 1930's, created a new style. It is fitting to associate with Wyler the turning point which--by error of judgement not corrected by the passing of time--post-war critics attributed to Citizen Kane, when, in fact, Welles, in this film, was still groping and being influenced by Wyler. (Madsen 1973: 284)

This crediting of a 'new style', as Bordwell highlights, was attributed by most critics to either Welles or Wyler.

> In discussing both Welles and Wyler, the *nouvelle critique* writers claimed that *profondeur de champ* [staging in depth] allowed the spectator freedom to scan the frame for significant information. (Bordwell 1997: 59)

What Bazin, Madsen and the majority of critics, obviously fail to realise is that the same man shot all these films, and logic dictates that these directors did not independently, or in some great conspiratorial gesture, begin using these new techniques simultaneously. The one man who shot all these films has to be given some of the credit, if not, it could be argued, sole credit for this innovation - Gregg Toland.

> He was always in the forefront of change, the first to adopt new methods made available by developing technologies in lighting,

> optics, and film stocks. He appears to have been driven by a compulsion to expand the accepted technical boundaries of the medium. He was also a shameless exhibitionist, fond of showing off stunning and sensational visual effects of his own devising - another trait that would endear him to Welles. *Citizen Kane* would provide the kind of atmosphere in which he preferred to work. As it turned out, it would also provide him with the opportunity to continue with a line of experimentation he had been following in his recent work. (Carringer 1982: 653)

My intention in this discussion of Toland is partly to reclaim the importance of his contribution to the development of film-making, as he became sidelined by the 'director as *auteur'* bias of the studies of films by Welles, Wyler, and Ford. My aim also is to demonstrate, by example, the significant contribution that a skilled and talented DoP can make to a film. Peter Wollen has told us that we have to look at a film-makers' body of work to determine the authorship qualities of the individual, so that is what I propose to do with Toland. "What the *auteur* theory does is to take a group of films - the work of one director - and analyse their structure" (Wollen 1972: 104). I have taken the work of one director of photography. This discussion will inevitably centre around *Citizen Kane*, and by reviewing the development of Toland's personal style I wish to emphasise the enormous artistic contribution he made to *Kane*.

> Historians generally persist in referring to Toland exclusively or primarily in connection with Citizen Kane and the cinematic techniques used therein. Consequently it is a little known fact that virtually all of Toland's cinematic contributions, including the oft-cited forced focus, were employed liberally by Toland prior to Citizen Kane. Nevertheless, Toland's contributions to film making and his role as a cinematographer of preeminence have suffered considerably from historical oversight. (Wallace 1976: 2)

Carringer makes almost the same point in his book on *The Making of Citizen Kane*, which highlights the contributions of Mankiewicz, Ferguson, the production designer, and Toland.

> If we look at Toland's films of the 1930s with *Citizen Kane* in mind, certain stylistic mannerisms take on a familiar look: the use of reflecting surfaces and of multiplane compositions in the Goldwyn musicals; the way Peter Lorre is lighted in *Mad Love;* the corner compositions of a character with his back to us at

> the side of the frame in *Come and Get It;* Laurence Oliver's face in darkness in some of the scenes in *Wuthering Heights;* and so on. Around 1939, however, these similarities begin to be more pervasive. Thanks to major new technical advances in the state of the art, Toland begins to evolve a radically new cinematographic style which will develop to its full maturity in *Citizen Kane.* (Carringer 1982: 659)

There are two major points of interest in reviewing Toland's work. One is the reoccurrence of certain visual motifs, and the other is the development of his own personal style, which had a hugely influential effect on directors such as Wyler and Welles. He developed (or contributed to) a visual style which subsequently inspired a generation of film-makers, although, as stated, Welles generally gets the credit for that, as typified by this remark by Bazin about *Kane*:

> Perhaps Welles's endeavour was fully possible only beyond the standardized, transparent cinema of the studio system, in an arena where no more resistance is offered to the artist's intention than to the novelist's pen. What is significant is that we owe the most audacious film in the last ten years to a young man of twenty-five who had nothing to recommend him except his ideas. (Bazin 1997: 237)

And this typical review by William Johnson, from *Orson Welles: Of Time and Loss*, in *Film Quarterly 21* (1967).

> Judged simply by its style, the film must be accounted an impressive achievement for any director, let alone a 25-year-old newcomer to the movie medium. Many of the stylistic effects that Welles used with such apparent ease in *Kane* have become common screen currency only during the last ten years - wide-angle perspective, unusually long takes, abrupt cuts, intricate leaps in time, terse vignettes, heightened natural sound, and so on. Though precedents can be found for each of these devices, Welles was the first director to develop them into a full-blown style. (Johnson 1967: 26)

Bazin and Johnson give full credit of the creativity and style within *Kane* to Welles, and equate his authorship with that of a 'novelist', ignoring all other contributions, presumably including Mankiewicz, Ferguson, Wise (editor) and, of course, Toland. It is almost naive to believe that an inexperienced director could construct such a sophisticated film without experienced and talented, creative support. Carringer is much more balanced in his analysis.

> *Citizen Kane* is a major artistic achievement only partly because of Welles's intelligence and personal style. Much is also due to its screenplay, art direction, cinematography, special effects, music, and sound. (Carringer 1985: 133)

**The Origins of the Visual Style of *Citizen Kane***

Many of the creative 'technical' innovations that have been written about in *Kane*, and subsequently attributed to Welles, have their origins in the development of the work of Toland. Amid the praise heaped on Welles it cannot be overstated enough that *Kane* was his first film, and the default position still held by most critics and theorist is summed up by Laura Mulvey in her 1992 discussion of the film, in *BFI Film Classics: Citizen Kane.*

> Competition over who first came up with an idea seems less significant once the idea has been transformed into film. Although it might be of academic interest to trace an idea to an origin other than a director's decision and vision, the film itself is not affected by contested attributions of authorship. For instance, the opening shots of *Citizen Kane*, on which a number of critics have based an argument for the 'readerliness' of the film, are given exactly in the Mankiewicz version of the script, 'American', that he and John Houseman, Welles's partner and co-founder of the Mercury Theatre, took back to RKO after several months of work, without Welles's participation or collaboration. On the other hand, the concept and camera strategy used in the opening shots is undoubtedly in keeping with Welles's aesthetic interests and expressive of the style he was evolving for his first foray into cinema. (Mulvey 1992:11)

Her first point is that authorship arguments are redundant, as long as we acknowledge that the director is the author. Her second point is that the film aligns itself with Welles's aesthetic. To paraphrase Kane's election speech, 'Welles did not have an aesthetic, because until then he had never made a film'. Put aside for a moment that the opening shots of the film were not the first scenes shot for the film (an assumption most academic writers seem to make). The aesthetic that the opening shots adhere to are Toland's, developed over eleven years of shooting films. *The Grapes of Wrath* (Ford, 1940) begins with a long shot of Tom walking a great distance, and the final shot of him (though not the

Figure 2: *Les Misérables*.

Figure 3: *Citizen Kane.*

Figure 4: *The Long Voyage Home.*

Figure 5: *Dead End*.

last shot of the film) is of him walking into the distance. *Dead End* (Wyler, 1937) begins with a gleaming cityscape, then the camera descends into the tenement area where the entire action of the film takes place, giving the idea that we are looking at the lowest levels of society. At the end of the film the camera reverses its action and rises back out of the dead-end street. This book-ending of the film is, of course, similar to the opening and closing of *Kane*, where the camera raises and descends to the 'No Trespassing' sign. As Welles had never made a film, it would appear more logical to say that Toland influenced the visual style of *Kane*, and subsequently Welles' visual style for the rest of his career.

*Citizen Kane* is often noted for its use of staging in depth, low camera angles, and (what is often noted as an innovate touch of 'realism') ceilinged sets. Is there evidence of these features in Toland's earlier work? Even the most cursory glance at Toland's previous films will bring out dozens of images that work with staging in depth, low angles and ceilinged sets. My own research has uncovered

Figure 6a: The same three stage track in *Kane*, starts in long shot...

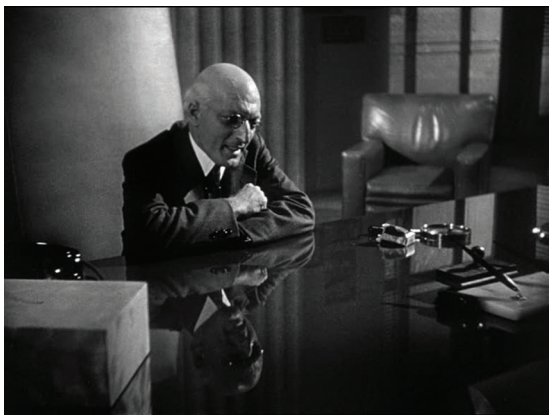

Figure 6b: ... tracks into a mid-shot, pausing for Berstein's story,...

Figure 6c: ...and then tracks into a close up when they talk about Kane.

Figure 6d: Berstein walks into the background, as the camera pans.

numerous instances of these three techniques throughout Toland's early career, for example, *Les Misérables* (Boleslawski, 1935) (fig. 2).

The projection room scene was actually the first scene shot for the film, and again many critics credit Welles with this radical new lighting style (fig. 3), also highlighted as part of 'Welles' aesthetic'. It is however clearly evident, as Wallace (1976: 95) points out, in the earlier *The Long Voyage Home,* (Ford, 1940) (fig. 4), and as I have discovered in the even earlier *Dead End* (fig. 5).

*Kane* is also noted for its long takes, often described as static shots, although there is a lot of camera movement in *Kane.* An example of such a scene is when the reporter Thompson (William Alland), is interviewing Kane's Business Manager, Berstein (Everett Sloane). The camera starts with a long shot, and tracks in as they discuss 'Rosebud'. The camera pauses as Bernstein tells an intimate story about his past, and then tracks in further when they discuss Kane's death. Finally,

Figure 7a: *The Dark Angel* three stage track begins in long shot.

Figure 7b: The camera tracks in as Gerald talks on the telephone.

Figure 7c: Gerald stands when he realises Alan is still alive.

Figure 7d: The camera then pans to the right as Kitty stands by the door.

as the tension and emotional intensity of the scene is released, Bernstein gets up and walks to the back of the office. The camera pans slightly to the right with him, so we end with a long shot. (Figs 6a-6d)

Whilst viewing *The Dark Angel* (Franklin, 1935) I saw exactly the same shot. The camera begins on a long shot of Gerald Shannon (Herbert Marshall) on the telephone. As the conversation continues, the camera tracks in and pauses. As Gerald realises the dramatic significance of the information he is receiving the camera tracks in again. When the telephone conversation finishes, the camera releases the tension by panning slightly to the right into a long shot of Kitty Vane (Merle Oberon) entering the room, in the same shot (figs 7a-7d).

The two shots are the same. The visual pattern is identical. More significantly the technique is used in both instances for the same storytelling purpose, to create a growing intimacy, then a release of tension. Toland was experimenting with long

Figure 8a: Martha reveals the truth about,...

Figure 8b: ... *These Three*.

Figure 9a: Francey tells 'Baby Face' Martin...

Figure 9b: ... the truth in *Dead End*.

takes of continuous action even in his first film as chief photographer *Palmy Days* (Sutherland, 1931).

Toland explored many techniques which symbolised, or represented the narrative in some way. A further example of this is the way some his characters move from shadow into the light, when they reveal the truth about themselves, examples include the following; *These Three* (Wyler, 1936), when Martha (Miriam Hopkins) emerges from the living room to tell Karen (Merle Oberon) the truth, that she is in love with Karen's boyfriend Joe (figs. 8a-8b), and in *Dead End*, when Francey (Claire Trevor) admits to 'Baby Face' Martin that she now works as a prostitute (figs. 9a-9b). Toland brings this technique, as he does with so many others, into *Citizen Kane* when Emily (Ruth Warrick) tells Kane he must concede the election to Boss Jim Gettys (Ray Collins), and that he must abandon his lover, Susan (Dorothy Comingore), and return home with her. Kane steps forward into the light to say that he is going to stay with Susan, and will continue to fight the election

Figure 10a: *Kane* reveals his true intentions...

Figure 10b: ... as he steps into the light.

(figs. 10a-10b). He reveals his true intentions, and perhaps love, as he steps into the light.

Although often cited for his 'technical' contribution to *Kane*, I have found little detailed analysis of Toland's career or work. Both Carringer and Wallace write excellent in-depth studies of Toland, but their scope is limited mainly to those 'new style' films of the late 1930s, early 1940s. I have looked at around 62% of Toland's films, from 1931 to his last *Enchantment* (Reis, 1948), and have identified a number of visual approaches Toland uses for storytelling, to give meaning to his images. His technical competence, clearly identifiable style, and creation of meaning, satisfies all three of Sarris' criteria for an *auteur* (1962: 42a-43b).

My aim is not to suggest the Toland is a single author, and should replace Welles as the *auteur* of *Citizen Kane*. My point is that we should recognise the contribution that cinematographers make to the films that they shoot, which means re-evaluating our ideas of authorship. Film is a collaborative medium. We can only achieve this by attempting to analyse the separate contributions made to a film by all the creative collaborators involved in its making.

**Analysis of Cinematographic Authorial Influence**

In terms of analysing cinematography Nilsen (n.d.: 20), Mitry (1963: 29), and Deleuze (1983: 5), all agree that the smallest, single element, and the most fundamental unit of a film that should be discussed, is the shot, especially in

narrative-based cinema.

In his book *Figures Traced in Light,* Bordwell points out that the audience's understanding of what we call plot comes "through the patterned use of the medium's techniques. Without performance and framing, lens length and lighting, composition and cutting, dialogue and music, we could not grasp the world of the story" (Bordwell, 2005: 32). Bordwell does divide style, which he says is the texture of the film, into four functions; denotation, expressive, symbolic and decorative. The latter obviously includes a purely aesthetic motivation, and to a certain extent is the least interesting. Denotation is the literal representation of subject matter, and action. Expressive function communicates on a more emotional level, moods and feelings. Finally, the symbolic function of style can be used to represent meaning in a more abstract, but no less direct, way.

Deleuze categorizes shots in *Cinema 1* (1983), which he describes as 'movement-images', into three types: the 'affection-image', the 'perception-image' and the 'action-image'. The 'affection-image' he associates with the close-up, and to a certain extent can be compared with Bordwell's idea of the expressive function of style in terms of its emotive qualities. The 'perception-image' seems to be one where information in terms of setting, location, or details, are perceived by either the characters in the film, or the audience, or, as is often the case, both. The 'action-image' either conveys literal action, or change over time.

To a certain extent I see little difference in the thematic identification of visual information in Deleuze's two types of shot, the 'perception-image' and the 'action-image'. Both give narrative detail, the former shows us ideas of setting and location, the latter displays events, and incidents of the narrative. These are functions of the composition that I would categorise as informational, and Bordwell as denotation. The content of the 'movement-image', at its most basic level, reveals narrative information.

Nilsen compares the long shot with the view of an 'outside observer', and the progression to medium shots and close-ups taking the viewpoint into the scene (Nilsen, n.d.: 37). To a certain extent this equates the long shot to the theatrical experience of sitting in an auditorium, and the 'scene' is in a separate space, beyond the proscenium arch. The medium shot and the close-up could be said to take us onto the stage, into the space of the action. However, I don't necessarily agreed with this. Granted, there is often an 'objective' quality to

the long shot, because of the implied distance between the spectator and the action, but that does not mean it is without significance and emotion. This is also where Deleuze's association with the 'affection-image' with the close-up seems misleading. No one is going to argue that the theatrical experience is devoid of emotion, yet it is invariably drama in long shot.

The temptation to categorise shots is almost irresistible to the academic writer. Many writers satisfy themselves with the technical classification of shots as either, long shots, mid-shots or close-up, which is fairly easy to determine. Others then relate long shots to establishing shots, mid-shots to character shots, where the spatial relationship of characters is usually established, then close-ups as details within the 'set'. This however may represent the common usage of these types of shot, but does not apply in every case. Close-ups can be used as establishing shots, for example, a close-up of a dental practice sign will tell an audience that the scene is set in a dental practice.

Deleuze's attempt to define a similar categorisation of shots has the same limitations. Emotional qualities may be evident in a location setting shot, therefore the shot may be both an 'affection-image', and a 'perception image'. Nilsen uses a different approach. He tries to separate shots in terms of whether they are reproductional, pictorial or representational. Although he almost considers these definitions as working methodologies of the cameraperson, rather than as a way of categorising shots. Reproductional is the literal process of capturing objects and actions onto the recording medium, devoid of any creativity. Representational suggests meaning in the method of photography. It is probably impossible to come up with a universal theory that separates shots beyond their technical, or physical attributes, that is tracking shots, pans, tilts, slow-motion, time-lapse, etc.. A theory that proposes to separate shots in terms of their form and content together will probably fail, as certain techniques could serve various functions depending on their context. It would seem a more ideal approach to consider all shots with the same analytical criteria.

In order to do this I have considered Bordwell's, Deleuze's and Nilsen's approaches, and developed them into a single analytical framework for discussing every shot, that excludes technical categorisation, form, and deals with the content and function of the shot in the editing composition.

### *Compositional concepts*

Individual shots can be analysed in terms of their function, with the following compositional concepts; informational, emotional, thematic.

### *Informational Aspect*

This relates to Bordwell's initial function of denotation, but implies more meaning rather than just the mechanical reproduction of an object on film. It would also relate to Deleuze's 'perception-image', but would include all aspects of narrative information contained in the shot. This many include the physical information; setting, location, actions, etc., but also information relating to the narrative, which may be partly informed by the shot's placement in the editing composition.

### *Emotional Aspect*

This aspect relates more to the expressionistic qualities of the shot. It's mood, character and tone. It does not equate to the emotional states of the characters that may be in the shot, that would relate more to the informational aspect: that character is sad, this character is happy. The emotional quality of the composition maybe unrelated, or in contrast, to the emotions of the characters in the narrative. The shot may embody a sense of foreboding by its compositional aspects, whereas the characters may be unaware of this sense. This would relate to Bordwell's idea of an expressive function, and is evident in Toland's use of the three stage tracking shot (figs. 6-7), as discussed.

### *Thematic Aspect*

The final aspect of composition relates to a much broader idea of meaning. The thematic ideas behind the content of the narrative. This function of the compositional construct is what we would find the great cinematographers exploiting. It does not relate to Bordwell's functions of symbolic and decorative, these seem to me to be aspects of style rather than function, and parallel Nilsen's ideas of modes of shooting. Nilsen seems to imply three forms of cinematography, three approaches a cameraperson can take, the 'passive reproductional', the formalistic aesthetic (pictorial), which would actually parallel Bordwell's idea of decorative function, or the thematic representational, which is inspired by, and implicitly represents the thematic ideology of the narrative. This

latter example is Nilsen's higher ideal for the cinematographer, and encapsulates my third concept of composition. This is evident in Toland's work, for example, his use of light to represent truth (figs. 8-10).

**The Neglected Art of the Cinematographer**

Choosing a camera viewpoint holds many considerations, some of which are technical, but the technical is there to serve the creation of meaning. Many books on cinematography concentrate on the technical aspects of the job, and spend little time discussing the creation of meaning. Complicated as these technical decisions can be it is akin to discussing word processing menus, or digital script writing packages, when discussing screen writing. It is the mechanics of the craft, knowledge that is essential, but mastering the menus of a software package doesn't make a screenwriter a great storyteller. Neither does understanding focal lengths, f-stops, lenses, contrast, film stocks, digital formats, make a camera operator a great cinematographer. Admittedly some of these technical aspects influence the creativity on a fundamental level, but it is the ability to compose a shot, using elements of composition - frame, lighting and movement - to embody the meaning of a narrative that makes a great DoP. It is, of course, fundamentally important that the craftsperson understands and knows how to utilise his/her tools for best effect. The technical is not irrelevant, it is a fundamental foundation for a skilled artist.

Of course, there are films that just use the camera to record the action, Nilsen's notion of the 'passive reproductional', as there are lighting plans that just illuminate what needs to be seen, but both the camera and the light can be used to add layers of meaning, significance, and relevant symbolism to the image. This should be the purpose of great cinematography, or motion picture photography, the writing of a narrative with movement and light.

There is no set formula for how to shoot a scene, in the same way that there is no 'formula' for writing a good story. Many commentators on story structure mistake it for a recipe for formulaic narratives. Story structure is akin to ideas of pictorial composition, it guides notions of form, not content. The approach depends on what 'commentary' the cinematographer needs to add to a scene, or what aspects of the narrative, character development or thematic concepts, they want to represent. Once this has been decided upon, then strategies of expressing these

ideas can be made.

There are, of course, strategies that have been ‘discovered’ and sometimes turned into conventions for individual shots and editing compositions, for example, a low camera angle makes a subject powerful or dominant, and conversely a high camera angle can have the opposite effect. The practice of shot-reverse-shot, or shooting static ‘master shots’, ‘two-shots’ and then ‘singles’ can often be categorised as the “passive reproductional”. These approaches are the fixing of action that happens in front of the lens onto the recording medium, a purely mechanical process often devoid of any creativity. Compositional aspects from drawing, painting, and photography can all apply to a motion picture frame, the elements that add to the challenge of the cinematographer are aspects of time. The change that occurs within a shot, as we have seen with Toland’s three stage tracking shot, the mood and thematic idea within the shot can develop as the shot progresses. The other time elements, including that fact that the duration that the viewer can observe the image is finite, and the notion of editing composition, the fact that the single shot will not be viewed in isolation, are all vital. Individual shots are built into sequences, which must have a coherent meaning, or cohesive style.

**Conclusion**

The weakness of the early *auteur* critics is that they fixate on the director as the single creative author of a film. Clearly, as some others point out, film-making is a collaborative process, and it is often difficult to attribute the source of an idea, or concept, to one individual. Is it the writer, who is totally ignored by the early theorists, probably due to Truffaut’s bias? Is it the director, the DoP, the designer, the actor, or the editor? Or is it, as seems more obvious, a combination of influences? What makes the theory of authorship difficult is that this combination of influences alters from crew to crew, team to team, film to film. Sometimes it is reasonable to suggest one individual has much more influence over a project than any of the others working on it, but it is the team that is important. Welles made films after *Kane*, with less skilled collaborators, which resulted in lesser films: *The Lady From Shanghai* (1948), *Confidential Report* (1955). The inconsistencies in the films of other so-called *auteurs* can probably also be accounted for by the same criteria, that is the experience and skill of their collaborators.


Figure 11.

If we accept this as a premise the next task is to identify key collaborators. However we should not make the same mistake as the early theorists by pointing at one (or two) specific roles, the writer and the director. As I have stated the key creative personal in the realisation of a film can include the producer, the DoP, the designer and the editor. Although I would not go as far to say that they all contribute, in all circumstances. Each film team works uniquely, taking into account the experience, skill and personalities of the individuals involved. In this way we can probably be no more specific than to recognise that the authorship of any film doesn't belong to one individual (the director), but more likely two, or three, possibly six, to varying degrees of contribution. I would purpose that *Citizen Kane*'s success is due to the fact that it is a masterclass in collaboration, not that it is the work of a 'genius' single author. It is Mankiewicz's script, Toland's photography, Wise's editing *and* Welles's direction that make this film great.

I propose a new pattern of attributing authorship for films that should take into account the collaborative nature of the process, and identify the key contributions made to individual films. As in figure 11, I believe the central hub of the collaboration to be between the writer, director, cinematographer, and editor. I have put the director at the centre of this hub, as he/she will work closely with the other three, whereas the three may not even meet, as they theoretically work on different stages of the production of a film. Beyond this we must also take into

account the influence of the actors, sound designers, composers, and production designers. I have deliberately placed them outside the central hub on the general principle that their contribution may be more limited in its scope. Finally the whole team is encompassed by the executive producer and/or studio. Certainly in the early studio system of Hollywood this authorial influence can be clearly seen.

Perhaps in the future films should be referenced in terms of all of their authors, for example, *Citizen Kane* (Mankiewicz, Toland, Welles, Wise, 1941), or at the very least, *Citizen Kane* (Welles et al., 1941).

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